

the Epithet Romantic.

The epithet *romantic* has obviously ^{to these} no similarity ^{in the} words in its coinage, but it is considerably like them in mode and effect of its application. For having partly quitted the rank of plain epithets, it has become a convenient exploding word, of more special deriding significance than the other words of its order, such as wild, extravagant, "visionary." It is a standard expression of contemptuous despatch, which you have often heard pronounced with a very self-complacent air, that said, "How much wiser I am ^{r.>} than some people," by the indolent and inanimate on what they would not acknowledge practicable, by the apes of prudence on what they accounted foolishly adventurous, and by the slaves of custom on what startled them as singular. The class of absurdities which it denominates is left so undefined, that all the views and sentiments which a narrow cold mind could not like or understand in an ample and fervid one, might be referred thither; and yet the word *seems*, or assumes, to discriminate their character so conclusively as to put them out of argument. With this cast of sapience and vacancy of sense, it is allowed to depreciate without being accountable; it has the license of a parrot, to call names without being taxed with insolence. And when any sentiments are decisively stigmatized with this denomination, it would require considerable courage to attempt their rescue and defence; since the imputation which the epithet fixes on them will pass upon the advocate; and he may expect to be himself enrolled among the heroes of whom Don Quixote is from time immemorial the commander-in-chief. At least he may be assigned to that class which occupies a dubious frontier space between the rational and the insane. - If, however, the suggestions and sketches which I had endeavoured to exhibit as interesting and practicable, were attempted to be turned into vanity and "thin air" by the enunciation of this epithet, I would say, Pray now what do you mean by *romantic*? Have you, as you pronounce it, any precise conception in your mind, which you can give in some other words, and then distinctly fix the charge? Or is this a word, which because it is often used in some such way as you now use it, may be left to tell its own meaning better than the speaker knows how to explain it? Or perhaps you mean, that the notions which I am expressing recall to your mind, as kindred ideas, *the fantastic images